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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6275
INFO RUEHCR/AMCONSUL DURBAN 0362
RUEHCR/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 0407
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0821
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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINS MOPS PREL SF
SUBJ: MALAN ON THE LESSONS OF "ASKARI"

State Dept. review completed

REF: FBIS MBABANE 211220 JAN

1. IN THE COURSE OF A ROUTINE CALL BY ~~GOBEL~~ ROTH, THE ASSISTANT EDITOR OF DIE BURGER, LOUIS LOUW, VOLUNTEERED THAT DEFENSE MINISTER MAGNUS MALAN HAD RECENTLY TOLD A DIE BURGER REPORTER THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE COULD NOT MOUNT ANOTHER "OPERATION ASKARI" INTO ANGOLA. BY WAY OF AMPLIFICATION, LOUW -- SPEAKING MATTER-OF-FACTLY AND PERHAPS IMPRECISELY -- EXPLAINED THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS, INSTEAD OF ENCOUNTERING 50 TANKS AS THEY ANTICIPATED, HAD ACTUALLY RAN UP AGAINST 150. TO COUNTER THAT SIZE ARMOR FORCE WOULD, LOUW ADDED, ENTAIL TOO LARGE AN OPERATION.
 2. LOUW'S COMMENTS CAME IN THE CONTEXT OF A DISCUSSION OF A RECENT DIE BURGER PIECE, ASKING WHERE WAS THE POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE SWA/NAMIBIA PROBLEM TO BUILD UPON THE RECENT MILITARY SUCCESS.
 3. COMMENT: WE ARE FRANKLY A BIT SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE ACCURACY OF THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO MALAN AND MORE THAN A LITTLE SURPRISED THAT LOUW, A SEASONED JOURNALIST, WOULD BANDY ABOUT SUCH AN ASSESSMENT WITH USG OFFICIALS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE SADF RAN INTO MORE THAN THEY EXPECTED AROUND CUVELAI. BUT, UNTIL WE RECEIVE FURTHER CORROBORATION OF THIS REPORT, WE RECOMMEND THAT ADDEES KEEP THIS IN THE BACK OF THEIR MINDS RATHER THAN FULLY ACCEPT IT.
- SCISSORS
END OF MESSAGE

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